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LOST JUNGLE

TO MOST MEN WHO FOUGHT THERE, THE ISLAND OF NEW GUINEA HAD BEEN A JUNGLE HELL. BUT THIS IS A STORY OF A FEW MEN WHO FOUND A STRANGE HAVEN THERE, A PARADISE REMOTE FROM THE CARNAGE OF WAR...



Chapter 1. *Mutiny in Action*

LIKE GHOSTLY WRAITHS, THE TOUGH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRYMEN MOVED QUIETLY THROUGH THE NEW GUINEA JUNGLE, EVERY SENSE ALERT FOR THE FIRST SIGHT OR SOUND OF THE ENEMY...

FIVE PLATOON HAD BEEN CHOSEN ONCE MORE TO SCOUT AHEAD OF THE BATTALION...

PRIVATE LOFTY BURNS, A CYNICAL, HARD-BITTEN JUNGLE VETERAN, WHISPERED BRIEFLY TO SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS...

THE NIPS ARE CLOSE UP AHEAD, BLUEY—YOU KNOW THAT?

TOO RIGHT I DO—AND THIS NEW LIEUTENANT OF OURS WON'T BE TOLD A DARN THING!

YOUNG LIEUTENANT ADAM TRAVERS THOUGHT HIS TRAINING FITTED HIM TO FIGHT JAPS IN THE JUNGLE. ANY OF THE VETERANS COULD HAVE TOLD HIM DIFFERENTLY, BUT HE WOULD NOT LISTEN...

SPREAD OUT
ACROSS THE CLEARING...
DON'T BUNCH UP. HURRY
IT UP THERE, MEN - WE'VE
A LOT OF GROUND TO
COVER ON THIS PATROL.

HE MUST THINK
WE'VE NEVER DONE
THIS BEFORE!

THE SINGLE RIFLE SHOT ECHOED THROUGH THE JUNGLE, AS ADAM TRAVERS SLUMPED TO THE GROUND. THE CLEARING MAGICALLY EMPTIED OF MEN. FIVE PLATOON HAD DONE THIS BEFORE...

PIERCE EYES GLARED INTO THAT INSCRUTABLE SCREEN OF JUNGLE GROWTH...

THE LIEUTENANT'S BOUGHT IT - A LONE SNIPER'S MY GUESS. BUT THERE ARE PLENTY MORE JAPS JUST AHEAD...

YEAH... AND
THAT LEAVES YOU
IN COMMAND, BLUEY.
WHAT YOU GONNA
DO?

PLATOON COMMAND WAS NO NEW EXPERIENCE TO SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS...

THE OLD MAN RECKONED THERE WERE NO JAPS FOR A LONG WAY AHEAD... SEEMS HE WAS WRONG. BUT WE HAVE TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT IS UP THERE...

THE SNIPER... I SEE HIM, BLUEY!

TRAINED REFLEXES WORKING FAST, LOFTY BURNS SNAPPED THE LEE ENFIELD TO HIS SHOULDER, HIS EYES BLEAK AND MERCILESS.

NICE SHOOTING, LOFTY.

THE SNIPER'S LIFELESS BODY CRASHED TO THE JUNGLE FLOOR AND FIVE PLATOON CAT-FOOTED ON THROUGH THE TANGLE OF VINES AND CREEPERS AND FALLEN TREES...

THE LIEUTENANT WAS ASKING TO BE KNOCKED OFF, SAM. HE SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO BLUEY.

TRUE ENOUGH, DARKY. NOW BLUEY'S BACK IN COMMAND, FIVE PLATOON STANDS A CHANCE...

CALLING DEEP ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF JUNGLE LORE, THE SERGEANT TOOK THE LEAD...

THIS TRAIL'S TOO CLEAR... SOMEONE'S BEEN USING IT RECENTLY. COULD MEAN BOOBY TRAPS... BUT WE MUST PUSH ON!

LIFE FOR BLUEY WATTS AND HIS PLATOON COULD DEPEND ON INSTINCT NOW AND QUICK TRIGGER-FINGERS...

WONDER HOW LIEUTENANT WILLIAMS AND SIX PLATOON ARE GETTING ON? IT MIGHT BE THEM, OR US, THIS PATROL, BUT SOMEONE'S IN FOR THE CHOP... AND IF I CAN HELP IT, IT WON'T BE FIVE PLATOON!

THE JUNGLE THINNED AND FIVE PLATOON CREEPT OUT ON TO A RIDGE. BLUEY LOOKED OVER... AND LOFTY HEARD HIS QUICK INDRAWN BREATH...

JUST LOOK AT THAT LITTLE LOT, WILLYOU?

WHAT'S UP, BLUEY?

A black and white comic panel showing two soldiers in a jungle setting. They are on a ridge, looking down. The soldier on the left is wearing a hat and a patterned shirt, holding a rifle. The soldier on the right is also wearing a hat and a patterned shirt, holding a rifle. They are both looking down at something in the distance. The background shows a dense jungle with trees and foliage.

AS THE MEN OF FIVE PLATOON PEERED DOWNWARDS, THEY ALL UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION - AND WHAT THEY MUST DO.

JAPS BY THE HUNDRED!
SO WE WERE RIGHT,
AND THE COLONEL
WAS WRONG!

A black and white comic panel showing a soldier in a jungle setting. The soldier is wearing a hat and a patterned shirt, holding a rifle. He is looking down at something in the distance. The background shows a dense jungle with trees and foliage.

YEAH...AND
NOW WE GO BACK
SHARPISH INDEED
AND TELL HIM SO.
ABOUT TURN,
SPORTS!

LUCK AND SNILL HAD BROUGHT FIVE PLATOON THROUGH JAP-INFESTED JUNGLE, WITH ONLY THE LOSS OF THEIR OFFICER. BUT NOW THEIR LUCK RAN OUT...

AUSTRALIANS!
A PATROL, MOVING
AWAY!

THEY MUST DIE —
EVERY ONE! THEY HAVE
SEEN OUR CONCENTRATIONS
AND WILL RUIN OUR
SURPRISE...

A SECRET BUILD UP OF STRENGTH WAS A WEAPON THAT COULD TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE. USED PROPERLY...

HURRY! WE MUST
CATCH THEM BEFORE
THEY REACH THE
GORGE!

EYES CONSTANTLY SEARCHING FOR BOOBY TRAPS, FOR SNIPERS OR ENEMY PATROLS, THE TOUGH DIGGERS OF FIVE PLATOON WERE HASTENING BACK WITH THEIR VITAL INFORMATION.

MY BACK'S ITCHING SOMETHING AWFUL, SANI. THE NIPS MUST BE ON OUR TAIL...

CHEER UP, SPORT. BLUEY KNOWS YOU'VE GOT AN ITCHY BACK, TOO!



SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS DID. HIS OWN BACK ITCHED, TOO - WITH THAT NAGGING PERSISTENCE THAT WARNS FIGHTING MEN THAT AN ENEMY DOGS THEIR TAIL...



CORPORAL SPUD DOOLAN LED HALF THE PATROL ACROSS THE BRIDGE, COVERED BY BLUEY AND THE REMAINDER. AS SPUD FORMED A FIRING LINE, BLUEY WAVED HIS MEN BACK.

THEY'RE ALL ACROSS. OKAY, ANDY, BRETT, LOFTY - CROSS THE BRIDGE - AND MAKE IT SNAPPY!



EVEN AS THE OTHERS FOLLOWED YOUNG ANDY, A SUDDEN, VICIOUS FUSILLADE BATTERED THE JUNGLE AIR...

RUN FOR IT!
GET ACROSS THAT
BRIDGE FAST!

THEY MIGHT
MAKE IT, BUT BLUEY
NEVER WILL!

BREN GUNNER HAPPY ARMSTRONG KNEW THAT EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON HIM. HE SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER, LACING THAT HOSTILE GREENERY ACROSS THE GORGE WITH BULLETS...

THAT'S ONE OF
THE BLIGHTERS!
I CAN ONLY SPRAY
'EM AND KEEP
THEIR HEADS DOWN.
RUN, BLUEY, RUN!

AUSTRALIA

...AND SERGEANT
BLUEY WATTS
RAN FOR HIS LIFE!

IF I GET AWAY WITH
THIS I'LL BE THE LUCKIEST
DIGGER IN THE ARMY!



HIS LUCK HELD, EVEN THOUGH
BULLETS CRACKED ALL ABOUT HIM,
UNTIL HE REACHED THE OTHER
SIDE. THEN ONE HIT HIM IN THE
ARM...

UGH!



FOR THE MOMENT THERE WAS NO
PAIN. BLUEY KNEW WHAT HE MUST
DO, EVEN AT THAT INSTANT OF
DESPERATION...

GOTTA CUT
THE ROPES!
GOTTA STOP
THE JAPS
GETTING THE
REST OF THE
LADS!



FRANTIC WITH ANGER LEST THE AUSTRALIANS ESCAPE, THE JAPANESE LIEUTENANT LED HIS MEN IN A WILD CHARGE ACROSS THE BRIDGE...



AND THEN A FAMILIAR LANKY FORM DROPPED DOWN BESIDE BLUEY AND BEGAN TO HACK AT THE ROPES, ALSO...



THE JAPANESE HAD ALMOST CROSSED THE BRIDGE WHEN THE ROPES PARTED.



ALL EXHAUSTED, SOME WOUNDED, THE SURVIVORS OF FIVE PLATOON SET OFF AGAIN FOR BATTALION HEADQUARTERS.

I RECKON YOU SAVED OUR LIVES BACK THERE, BLUEY.

BUT NOT ANDY'S... THIS HASN'T BEEN A GOOD PATROL. BUT WE MUST TELL THE COLONEL ABOUT THAT JAP BUILD UP. THAT'S WHAT COUNTS NOW!



THE BATTALION HAD HELD A MISERABLE RIDGE FOR TOO LONG AND THEY WERE THANKFUL TO BE ON THE MOVE AGAIN EVEN IF IT MIGHT MEAN MORE FIGHTING.

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR. MISTER TRAVERS DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HIT HIM, BUT THOSE JAPS WE SAW...

WE'RE MOVING TO AREA ZULU, BLUEY, SO WE'D BETTER SEE OUR NEW C.O. RIGHT AWAY. TRAGIC ABOUT YOUNG TRAVERS...



MANY OTHER MEN OF THE BATTALION WAVED A GREETING TO SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS AS HE LED HIS WEARY PATROL IN TO REPORT. THOSE MEN KNEW HIS WORTH AS A FIGHTING COMRADE - BUT THE COLONEL WAS NEW TO THE BATTALION...

BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! THE JAPS JUST CAN'T HAVE BUILT UP A CONCENTRATION IN THE LAGHI VALLEY! HOW MANY DID YOU SAY, SERGEANT?

BEST PART OF A BRIGADE GROUP, SIR. IF LIEUTENANT TRAVERS HADN'T BEEN KILLED...



AT THAT MOMENT, LIEUTENANT WILLIAMS AND SIX PLATOON'S PATROL CAME IN. COLONEL DAVIS TURNED BRUSQUELY TO THE YOUNG OFFICER...

YOU WERE SENT PAST THE LAGHI VALLEY, WILLIAMS. DID YOU SEE ANY SIGN OF JAPS?

DIDN'T SEE ONE, SIR. THE JUNGLE WAS BAD ENOUGH.

BUT IF WE GO TO THE AREA ZULU, SIR, THE JAPS IN THE LAGHI VALLEY WILL OUTFLANK US - WE'LL WALK INTO A TRAP!



UNCERTAINTIES, THE BILIOUS FEARS OF COMMAND, BROUGHT COLONEL DAVIS' TEMPER TO BOILING POINT...

I'M NOT CANCELLING THE ORDER TO AREA ZULU! I DON'T BELIEVE THE SERGEANT SAW ANY JAPS... HIS OFFICER WAS KILLED BY A SNIPER. MAYBE HE RAN INTO A STRAY PATROL - AND THE SERGEANT MADE THIS STORY UP TO COVER HIS COWARDLY WITHDRAWAL!



SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS HAD FOUGHT HIS WAY UP FROM THE SYDNEY SLUMS TO A SERGEANT IN THE ARMY, A MAN WITH RESPECT. BUT HE HAD MANY FRIENDS IN THE BATTALION - AND THIS STUPID COLONEL INTENDED TO KILL THEM ALL.

IF YOU SEND THE BATTALION TO AREA ZULU YOU'LL KILL THEM ALL. SEND THEM TO AREA QUEEN - THAT WAY YOU'LL OUTFLANK THE JAPS...



CAPTAIN CREEPY UNDERSTOOD THE PASSION FLAMING IN BLUEY WATTS...



YOU CAN TRUST SERGEANT WATTS, COLONEL...

ARE YOU PRESUMING TO TEACH ME MY JOB, SERGEANT? YOU'RE UNDER ARREST! I'LL THROW THE BOOK AT YOU FOR THIS!

LOOK, COLONEL - THOSE ARE MEN'S LIVES YOU'RE PLAYING WITH!

FURIOUSLY, COLONEL DAVIS ISSUED HIS ORDERS. ORDERS THAT HAD TO BE OBEYED...

YOU MEN! TAKE THIS SERGEANT UNDER ARREST! MARCH HIM OFF TO THE PROVOST POST - AT THE DOUBLE!



YOU BLIND FOOL! IF YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH WHEN IT'S THROWN AT YOU, PERHAPS YOU'LL UNDERSTAND THIS!

AS COLONEL DAVIS SLUMPED SENSELESS TO THE FLOOR ALL MOTION SEEMED SUSPENDED IN THE NEW GUINEA DUGOUT. THEN...



LOFTY CALLED IN THE REST OF FIVE PLATOON'S PATROL AND BLUEY TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED. THE AIR CRACKLED WITH TENSION.

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE, BLUEY! DON'T DO ANYTHING ELSE YOU'LL BE SORRY FOR!

LISTEN, CAPTAIN—
WE SAW THOSE
JAPS!



BREATHING DEEPLY, BLUEY PICKED UP THE PHONE AND WAS PUT THROUGH TO THE SECOND-IN-COMMAND. HE SPOKE TAUTLY, URGENTLY...

YES! THERE IS A BRIGADE GROUP OF JAPS IN THE LAGHI VALLEY. THE BATTALION'S OBJECTIVE IS NOW AREA QUEEN. WE CAN OUTFLANK THE JAPS THERE. YES — THE COLONEL'S ORDERS!



Chapter 2. Crash Landing

ON A FLAT SCRAP OF AIRFIELD BEHIND THE FRONT, A DAKOTA WAITED FOR ITS PASSENGERS. THE PILOT AND NAVIGATOR WERE NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE FORTHCOMING FLIGHT TO THE COAST.

SOON BE DAWN, CHUCK. THIS IS ONE TRIP I'LL BE HAPPY TO SEE FINISHED.

ME, TOO! I DON'T FANCY CARTING A PLANELOAD OF GAOL-BIRDS OVER THE JUNGLE. STILL, I SUPPOSE EVERY ARMY HAS TO HAVE ITS CROOKS.

AS THE DAWN THRUST FIERY FINGERS ABOVE THE DISTANT JUNGLE, A GRIM PROCESSION WENDED ON TO THE AIRSTRIP...

STEP LIVELY THERE, YOU LOT! YOU'VE A NICE COMFY PLANE RIDE AHEAD.

HERE THEY ARE. WHAT A MEAN COLLECTION OF RATBAGS!

I WOULDN'T TRUST THEM WITH A USED MATCH!



THE SPEED OF EVENTS HAD SHAKEN BLUEY WATTS CONSIDERABLY. HE AND HIS PALS HAD HELD THE COLONEL AND THE OFFICERS AT GUNPOINT UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE FOR THE BATTALION TO CHANGE ORDERS. THEN HE HAD MEEKLY GIVEN IN. NOTHING HE COULD SAY COULD EXONERATE HIM...

WHAT ELSE COULD I HAVE DONE? THE COLONEL WOULD HAVE SENT THE BATTALION TO ITS DOOM... AT LEAST, I SAVED THAT...



EVENTS HAD PASSED WITH FRIGHTENING SPEED FOR LOFTY BURNS, TOO...

I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT INTO THIS MESS... BUT WHAT BLUEY SAYS GOES, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED!

STEP LIVELY, LAWRIE, YOU'VE GOT A ONE-WAY TICKET ON THIS TRIP.

AW, WIND YOUR NECK IN!



AS THE SPEAKER, A BIG BRUTE OF A MAN, CLIMBED HEAVILY INTO THE DAKOTA, THE PILOT SPOKE SOBERLY TO THE PROVOST SERGEANT...

WHO'S THAT
PUG-UGLY SERGEANT?
WHAT'S HE DONE?

THAT'S MAN LAWRIE...
WHAT HASN'T HE DONE,
YOU MEAN, SIR. HE'S IN
FOR THE LOT, AND HE'LL
FACE A FIRING SQUAD
WHEN THEY'VE FINISHED
PUTTING HIM THROUGH
THE MILL.

A MEAN-
LOOKING
DEVIL!



WITH A RUMBLING GROWL OF ENGINES, THE DAKOTA TOOK OFF, NOT FOR A MOMENT DID THE PROVOST SERGEANT'S STEELY EYES LEAVE THE MAN CALLED MAN LAWRIE...

JUST ONE CHANCE
OF A BREAK—THAT'S
ALL I WANT. IT'S ME
FOR THE CHOP UNLESS
I CAN GET AWAY...



UP IN THE PILOT'S CABIN, A MESSAGE CRACKLED IN OVER THE RADIO...

MET WARNING, CHUCK.
A BIG BLOW BUILDING UP
RIGHT ON COURSE, LESS
THAN FIFTY MILES
AWAY.

THAT MEANS
WE'LL HAVE TO
DIVERT...



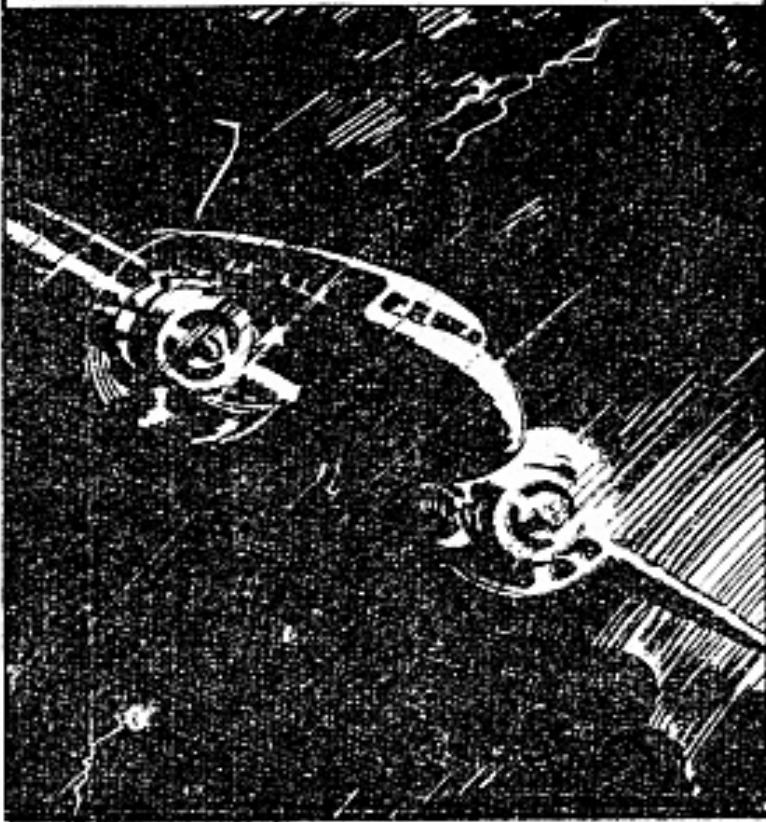
FREAK TROPICAL STORMS, WITH WINDS
OVER A HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR,
COULD BLOW UP FROM NOWHERE. THE
DAKOTA BANKED ON TO A DIVERGENT
COURSE...

THOSE
THUNDERHEADS
ARE BUILDING UP
THIS WAY-FAST!

WE'LL NEVER
GET ROUND THEM,
CHUCK! WE'LL HAVE
TO TURN BACK!



BUT WITH THE SPEED OF A STRIKING
COBRA THE STORM ATTACKED THE
DAKOTA, TOSSED IT CONTEMPTUOUSLY
LIKE A DRIVEN LEAF. LIGHTNING
FORKED DOWN, TORRENTIAL RAIN
HAMMERED THE AIRCRAFT.



LIKE A CRUSHED AND BATTERED MOTH, THE DAKOTA WAS FORCED LOWER AND LOWER UNTIL IT SPUN INTO THE GROUND...



AS QUICKLY AS IT HAD BUILT UP, THE STORM SUBSIDED. SHAKEN, BRUISED, SHOCKED, THE SURVIVORS CRAWLED FROM THE WRECKAGE.



GIVE ME A HAND WITH THE NAVIGATOR. I THINK HE'S BOUGHT IT!

RIGHTO, SPORT. YOU OKAY, LOFTY?

TOO RIGHT, BLUEY. I'LL FIND THE OTHERS...

A MISERABLE, WET, FORSAKEN
LITTLE BAND AT LAST
CONGREGATED BY THE
SHATTERED FUSELAGE.

WHAT A MESS!
RADIO SMASHED...
MAROONED IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE NEW
GUINEA JUNGLE...

AT LEAST
WE'RE ALIVE!

HEY! WHAT
ABOUT TAKING
OFF THESE CUFFS
NOW?

THE REQUEST SEEMED REASONABLE TO BLUEY. HE TURNED FOR THE KEYS
FROM THE DEAD PROVOST SERGEANT. WHEN A MOCKING VOICE FROZE
HIM IN HIS TRACKS.

LOOKING FOR
THE KEYS, SOLDIER?
YOU'RE A BIT LATE...
NOW UNLOCK MY
MATES. SHARP!

THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE THREAT IN MAX LAWRIE'S VOICE — NOR IN THE BLACK MENACING MUZZLE OF THE TOMMY GUN.

THAT'S RIGHT, SONNY. NOW DON'T ANY OF YOU GET THE WRONG IDEA — I'LL SHOOT, IF I HAVE TO...

I'LL UNLOCK YOUR PALS, MAX. BUT —



BUT NOTHING, SPORT. WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. I DUNNO WHAT YOU'VE DONE, BUT IT MUSTA BEEN REAL DINKUM BIG TO SEND YOU BACK TO AUSSIE WITH MAX LAWRIE!

I HIT MY COLONEL... HELD UP OFFICERS AT GUN POINT... COUNTERMANDED AN ORDER...



BIG MAX LAWRIE LAUGHED!

STONE THE CROWS! THEY'LL HAVE YOU BREAKING ROCKS UNTIL YOU DIE, SPORT. YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE.

WHAT CHANCE HAVE ANY OF US IN THIS JUNGLE?



IN THE ENSUING HOURS, A QUICK RECONNAISSANCE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS SHOWED THAT THEY HAD BEEN MAROONED DEEP IN THE UNEXPLORED HEART OF NEW GUINEA.

WE'RE IN A VALLEY, SURROUNDED BY A RING OF HILLS. NOT A WAY OUT IN SIGHT. WELL, THAT'S A BIT OF LUCK!



LOFTY BURNS FROWNED AS HE LOOKED AT MAX LAWRIE...

LUCKY? WHAT'S LUCKY ABOUT IT?

YOU DIM-WITTED JOKER. DON'T YOU SEE? WE WERE ALL ON OUR WAY TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT OR WORSE. NOW THEY'LL THINK WE'RE ALL DEAD. THEY'LL NEVER FIND US HERE!



BLUEY SEIZED ON THE IDEA AT ONCE...

IT'S THE ONLY ANSWER. IF WE GO BACK, WE FACE COURT-MARTIAL, IMPRISONMENT, HARD LABOUR. I'LL STAY HERE!

MY SIDE, BLUEY. I THINK I BROKE A RIB - IT DIDN'T HURT AT FIRST - BUT NOW!



DARKY ROBERTS HAD SLUMPED TO THE GROUND IN PAIN AND BLUEY DROPPED ANXIOUSLY ON ONE KNEE...

I NEED
A DOCTOR, BLUEY.
YOU'VE GOT TO
GET A DOCTOR!

WE'RE MILES FROM
CIVILISATION, DARKY...
THERE AREN'T ANY
DOCTORS. WE'LL HAVE
TO TRY TO FIX YOU UP!



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CHUCK KINCAID HAD BEEN SILENT UNTIL THAT MOMENT. NOW HE STEPPED FORWARD RESOLUTELY...

LOOK HERE, LAWRIE—
YOU'RE STILL UNDER MILITARY
DISCIPLINE! I'M THE SENIOR
OFFICER PRESENT AND SO
I'M TELLING YOU WE'RE
HEADING OUT OF HERE RIGHT
NOW —

SHUT YOUR TRAP,
RATBAG! I'M IN CHARGE
HERE AND THIS TOMMY
GUN IS MY BADGE OF
RANK — SEE?



THE TWO MEN GLARED AT EACH OTHER AND THE OTHERS TENSED, WAITING FOR THE CRASH OF LAWRIE'S GUN. BUT, INSTEAD, THERE CAME A SHRILL CRY OF ALARM FROM ONE OF THE EX-PRISONERS...



THIEF AND DESERTER, SLIM CARNEY STARED IN TERROR AT THE WILD-LOOKING NATIVES. HIS FINGER TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER...

MAX-MAX/
QUICK, SHOOT
'EM!

HOLD IT,
SLIM—
HOLD IT!



MAX FLUNG HIMSELF BODILY AT SLIM, SENDING HIM CRASHING TO THE GROUND. THE PILOT, CHUCK, REACHED FORWARD EAGERLY FOR THE DROPPED OWEN-GUN.



YOU FOOL!
WE WANT THESE
BLOKES ON OUR
SIDE!

EVEN AS CHUCK'S HAND CLOSED ON THE GUN, A BOOT TRAPPED THE PILOT'S CLAWING FINGERS...



AAHH!
HOLD IT, CHUCK!
MAYBE WE'RE NOT
READY TO GO BACK
TO A COURT-MARTIAL!

CHUCK STARED UP SICKLY INTO THE BLEAK FACE OF SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS...



BUT YOU'RE NOT
A MURDERER, BLUEY!
MAX HASN'T A THING
TO LOSE - BUT YOU...

I TRIED TO SAVE
MY MATES - AND
THE ARMY THREW
ME INTO GAOL. WHY
SHOULD I GO BACK
THERE UNTIL THE
WAR'S OVER?

AGAIN THAT BIG BOOMING LAUGH
OF MAX'S CRASHED OUT.

YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT
IDEA, SPORT! NOW WE'LL
PARLEY WITH THESE
FUZZIES AND FIND US
TUCKER, SHELTER.

ALL RIGHT, MAX.
WE'LL NEED TO FIX
UP DARKY - BUT I'M
HOLDING ON TO
THIS GUN!



THE NATIVES HAD BELIEVED THE WHOLE WORLD LAY IN THEIR VALLEY. THEY
HAD NEVER SEEN A WHITE MAN BEFORE.

WELL, SPORTS, THIS
IS THE LIFE OF RILEY!

WHAT ARE WE GONNA
DO ABOUT THE PILOT
AND RED-CAPS, MAX?



THE ICE-COLD KILLING RAGE THAT JUMPED INTO MAX'S FACE TOLD HIS HENCHMEN ALL THEY NEEDED TO KNOW...

IF THEY STAY
IN LINE THEY CAN
LIVE HERE. THE FIRST
CROOK MOVE—AND
THEY'RE DEAD!



SENSING THEIR NEARNESS TO DEATH, CHUCK AND THE LANCE CORPORAL PROVOSTS REMAINED QUIET. EVEN THE NATIVES DIVINED A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS...

THEY DON'T GET WAITED
ON LIKE WE DO, BLUEY. WHAT
D'YOU THINK MAX WILL
DO ABOUT THEM?



IF THEY DO ANYTHING
STUPID, LOFTY, THEN
MAX WILL SHOOT 'EM.
HE'S THE BIG MAN
AROUND HERE...

BITTERNESS AND ANGER AGAINST THE ARMY HAD SOURED SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS. HE HAD TRIED TO DO HIS DUTY AND HAD BEEN TREATED LIKE A CRIMINAL.



I DON'T OWE THE ARMY ANYTHING! IT'S ME FOR NUMBER ONE FROM NOW ON. WE'VE A CUSHY BILLET HERE...

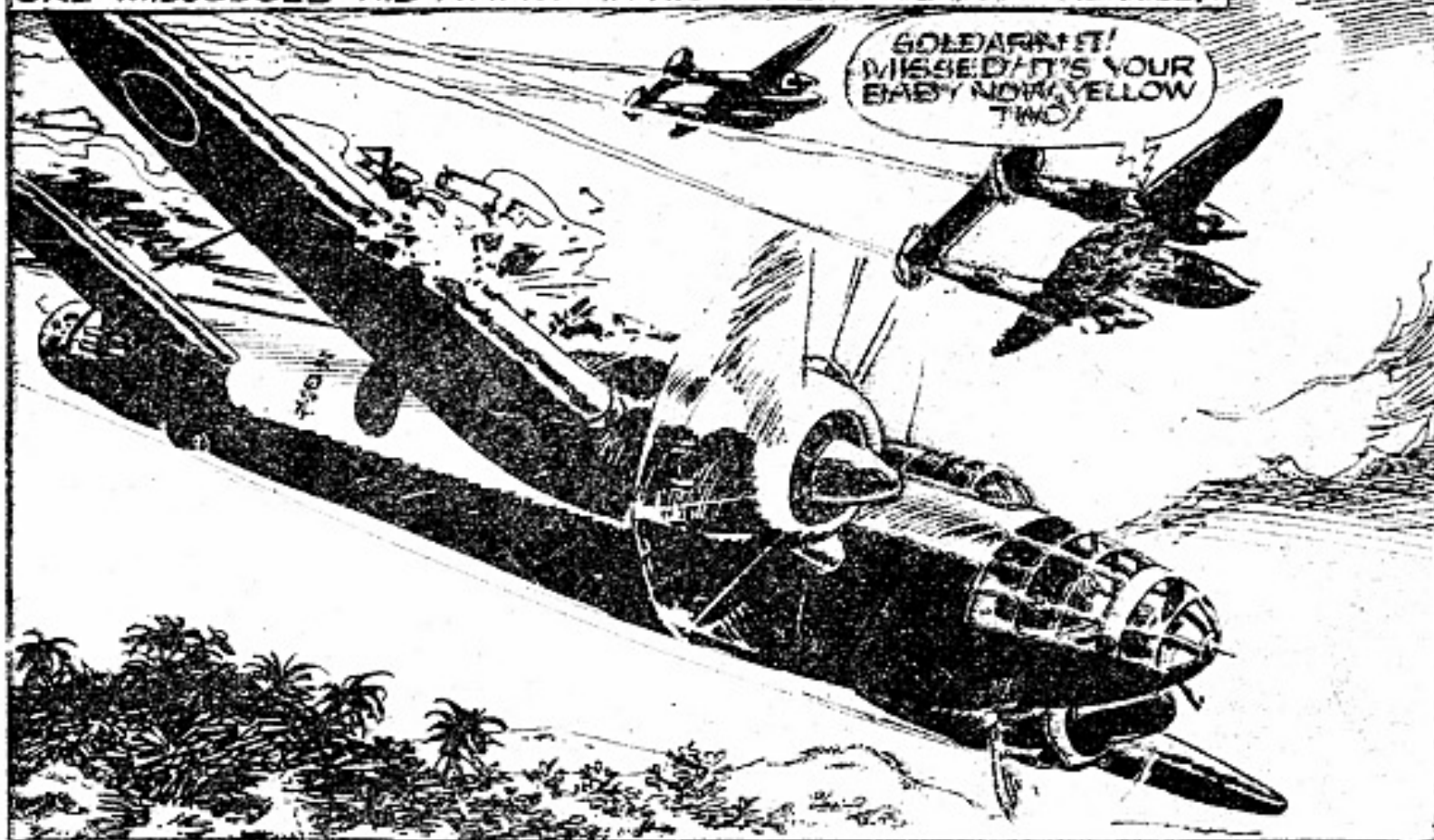
SOME MILES AWAY, A PAIR OF U.S.A.A.F LIGHTNINGS, RETURNING FROM A PATROL, SUDDENLY SPOTTED AN INVITING BUT UNEXPECTED QUARRY.



HEY, YELLOW TWO, IS THAT A MIRAGE?

IT'S A PUSHOVER, YELLOW ONE AFTER YOU

THEIR PREY, A LONE JAPANESE TROOP-CARRIER, WAS SO SLOW THAT YELLOW ONE MISJUDGED HIS ATTACK IN HIS EAGERNESS FOR THE KILL.



INSIDE THE TROOP-CARRIER WERE A GROUP OF JAPANESE SOLDIERS WHO WERE BEING RUSHED AS REINFORCEMENTS TO A DESPERATE POSITION.



YELLOW TWO MADE NO MISTAKE ON HIS DEFLECTION BURST AND THE OTHER AMERICAN YELLED APPRECIATIVELY...

YIPPEE!
YOU GOT HIM,
YELLOW TWO!



LOW ON FUEL, THE TWO P38 LIGHTNINGS TURNED FOR THEIR BASE WHILE THE JAPANESE PILOT WRESTLED WITH HIS CONTROLS, STRIVING TO BRING THE CRIPPLED SHIP TO SOME SORT OF LANDING IN THE JUNGLE.



I THINK I CAN
HOLD HER... GROUND
COMING UP - NOW!

THE AERIAL COMBAT AND THE THICK COILS OF SMOKE FROM THE WRECK BROUGHT ALL THE DESERTERS OUT INTO THE VILLAGE SQUARE...

I THINK IT WAS A JAP...

THE FIGHTERS LOOKED LIKE LIGHTNINGS. I WONDER IF WE'VE GOT COMPANY D

NAH, SPORT. NO-ONE COULD LIVE THROUGH THAT SMASH!



BUT THE TOUGH JAPANESE SOLDIERS HAD - MOST OF THEM, UNDER THE WHIPLASH OF THEIR OFFICER'S TONGUE, THEY MOVED AWAY FROM THE WRECK JUST BEFORE IT EXPLODED.

LEAVE THE WOUNDED!
OUR DUTY IS TO JOIN OUR
UNIT AND FIGHT THE HATED
ENEMY. WE MARCH AT
ONCE!



AN EXCITED NATIVE BROUGHT THE FIRST NEWS TO THE VILLAGE.



MANY STRANGE MEN FROM THE SKY! THEY COME THIS WAY!

THIS LINGO IS LIKE ONE I KNOW. MUST BE A RELATED TRIBE. HE SAYS THE JAPS ARE COMING THIS WAY!

YEAH. THAT'S WHAT I UNDERSTOOD, TOO!

THE WAR THAT THE DESERTERS HAD THOUGHT SO FAR AWAY HAD SOUGHT THEM OUT IN THEIR JUNGLE PARADISE.

WELL, SO WHAT? WE AIN'T FIGHTING NO MORE BATTLES. LIE LOW AND MAYBE THE JAPS WILL GO AWAY!

THEY'LL BE TRYING TO GET OUT OF THIS VALLEY, BUT...



BUT NOTHING! IF THEY DON'T TANGLE WITH US THEY NEEDN'T KNOW WE'RE HERE!

THE MEN OF FIVE PLATOON LOOKED TO BLUEY FOR LEADERSHIP, BUT BLUEY WAS BITTER AND BEATEN.

WE DON'T WANT TO GET INTO A FIGHT... I'LL GO ALONG WITH MAX.



WISE OF YOU, SPORT? THE WAR'S OVER FOR US — AND DON'T FORGET IT!

EVEN THOUGH CAPTAIN HAGURA DROVE HIS MEN ON REMORSELESSLY, HE KNEW THEY NEEDED FOOD AND DRINK IF THEY WERE TO REMAIN EFFICIENT SOLDIERS OF THE EMPEROR...

WE WILL TAKE ALL WE NEED FROM THIS VILLAGE. IF THE NATIVES OBJECT—YOU KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!



THERE WAS BARELY TIME FOR THE AUSTRALIANS TO HIDE IN THE HUTS WHEN THE JAPANESE SOLDIERS RAMPAGED INTO THE VILLAGE.

WE NEED FOOD AND DRINK, DOG-QUICKLY!

AT ONCE, BUT WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY YOU TREAT US LIKE THIS...



THINGS HAD NOT TURNED OUT QUITE AS MAX EXPECTED... IT WAS CAPTAIN HAGURA WHO DEALT THE FINAL CARD IN THE HAND OF DEATH.

IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO QUESTION WHAT THE SOLDIERS OF THE EMPEROR ORDER! WE WILL TAKE WHAT WE NEED. THEN WE WILL BURN YOUR MISERABLE VILLAGE AS A LESSON!



INSIDE THE HUT, THE AUSSIES LOOKED AT EACH OTHER. IT WAS BLUEY WATTS WHO SPOKE FIRST...

IT'S NO GOOD—WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM!

NAH! WE CAN GET THE FUZZIES TO REBUILD THE VILLAGE!

BLUEY'S RIGHT! WE'LL KNOCK THOSE JAPS OFF BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT'S HIT 'EM. COME ON!



UNDER THE LASH OF CAPTAIN HAGURA'S TONGUE, THE NATIVES HAD SCATTERED TO FETCH FOOD AND DRINK. IT WAS THEN THE DESERTERS OPENED FIRE...

AUSTRALIAN DEVILS! HERE!

GIVE IT TO 'EM!

DON'T LET ANY GET AWAY!



ALTHOUGH THEY HAD BEEN CAUGHT UTTERLY UNPREPARED OUT IN THE OPEN, THE SOLDIERS OF JAPAN FOUGHT WITH VICIOUS COURAGE, A LIGHT MACHINE GUN WAS SCRAMBLED INTO ACTION, STIFFENING THE RESISTANCE...



AFTER THAT FIRST FURIOUS ONSLAUGHT, MAX AND HIS DESERTERS FALTERED...



THEN THE WHOLE SITUATION CHANGED — AS THE UNARMED FORGOTTEN MEN, CHUCK AND THE RED-CAPS, FLUNG THEMSELVES UPON THE ENEMY.



IN SECONDS THE FIGHT WAS OVER. TWO GRIM-FACED GROUPS OF SURVIVORS FACED EACH OTHER, GUNS IN HAND.



AT THAT MOMENT, THE MORTALLY WOUNDED CAPTAIN HAGURA PLAYED HIS LAST CARD IN THE GAME WITH DEATH. HE WOULD NEVER KNOW THAT HIS ACT WOULD HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES - FOR HIS OWN SIDE.



IT WAS THE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT, CHUCK KINKAID WHO WAS FELLED BY THAT BULLET - AND BLUEY REACTED VENGEFULLY...



THEN THE BRUTAL VOICE OF MAX BROKE IN AND THE POLICEMEN LOOKED UP IN DISMAY...



ONCE AGAIN THE BURLY MAX LAWRIE HAD THE SITUATION WELL UNDER CONTROL AND THE LANCE CORPORALS WERE HERDED INTO A HUT UNDER GUARD. BUT BLUEY COULD NOT FORGET THE AGONISED FACE OF THE PILOT, CHUCK, AS HE DIED...

WELL, WE GOT THROUGH THAT ALL RIGHT, BLUEY. BUT WHAT'S BITING YOU?

I JUST REMEMBERED THAT WE'RE FIGHTING A WAR, LOFTY - MAX ISN'T!

DESPITE HIS SLOWLY RE-AWAKENING FEELINGS, BLUE STILL MADE NO MOVE TO LEAVE THEIR JUNGLE PARADISE. LIFE THERE WAS VERY PLEASANT...

I HAVEN'T CAUGHT ONE ALL DAY, BUT WHAT DOES IT MATTER. HOW THOSE FUZZIES HIT FISH WITH THOSE BOWS AND ARROWS BEATS ME.

THEY DON'T HAVE CROOK EYES LIKE US, BLUEY!

MAX, TOO, HAD DISCOVERED NEW REASONS FOR CLINGING TO HIS HIDEOUT - GOLDEN REASONS...

THE FUZZIES SAID THEY FOUND 'EM UP IN THE HILLS, MAX. ARE THEY REAL? IS IT...?

YEAH, SLIM, YEAH! GOLD! THE REAL STUFF! WE CAN BE RICH!

BUT FOR THE NATIVES' LIKING FOR GOLD NUGGETS AS ADORNMENT: BUT FOR MAX'S AVARICE IN FORCING THE WHOLE PARTY TO GO IN SEARCH OF MORE - THE WAR IN THAT PART OF NEW GUINEA WOULD HAVE TAKEN A DARK TRAGIC TURN...

HOW MUCH FARTHER? WE MUST BE NEARLY OUT OF THE VALLEY.

ANOTHER HOUR... ANOTHER HOUR ONLY TO THE PLACE OF THE GOLDEN ROCKS.

WE'RE NOT GONNA LEAVE THIS VALLEY, MAX. NOT EVEN FOR GOLD!

TEMPER SHARPENED MAN'S WORDS AS HE SWORE VICIOUSLY AT HIS HENCHMAN...

AW, SHUT UP, SLIM!
IF WE CAN PAN ENOUGH GOLD
WE'LL MAKE OURSELVES RICH
FOR LIFE! AS SOON AS THIS
CURSED WAR'S OVER, WE
CAN GO BACK TO
CIVILISATION...



AT THE PLACE OF THE GOLDEN ROCKS, THE PARTY RESTED, EXHAUSTED FROM THE CLIMB. THEN, AS MAX SOUGHT EAGERLY WHERE THE GUIDE INDICATED, BLUEY WALKED TO THE CREST OF THE RIDGE.



TO BE RICH / TO HAVE
ENOUGH NOT TO FIGHT
AND STRUGGLE TO STAY
ALIVE / THIS PLACE IS A
PARADISE... RIGHT ENOUGH.
WHAT HARM WOULD IT DO
TO STAY HERE UNTIL IT'S
ALL OVER...?

THEN SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS LOOKED OVER THE CREST...

AUSSIE!
A WHOLE
BRIGADE OF 'EM,
FROM THE LOOK
OF IT!



SHAKEN BY THIS UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY, BLUEY TURNED TO WARN HIS COMRADES. SUDDENLY, HIS KEEN EYES NOTICED MOVEMENT ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE RIDGE...



THE JAPS, SKILLED IN SWIFT MOVEMENT OVER ROUGH COUNTRY, WERE CLIMBING ENERGETICALLY OUT OF THE CAULDRON OF THE JUNGLE.



Chapter 3. *Decision*

BLUEY PLUNGED BACK TOWARDS HIS COMRADES, HIS MIND IN A TURMOIL, HIS THOUGHTS CHAOTIC...



AS BLUEY WENT ON, MAX
STOOD UP TO STARE
CHALLENGINGLY AROUND
ON THE DESERTERS.

THERE'S A BRIGADE
OF AUSSIES, TOO. THE
JAPS ARE GETTING
SET TO AMBUSH
THEM!

WE'LL HIDE ALL TRACES
HERE, JUST IN CASE
SOME SNOOPER NOSES
AROUND. THEN WE
CAN COME BACK WHEN
THEY'VE FINISHED
FIGHTING THEIR
CURSED WAR!



THE LURE OF GOLD HAD DRIVEN ALL OTHER THOUGHTS EVEN FROM HIS FRIENDS' HEADS. BLUEY SAW SICKLY.

THE ARMY SMASHED ME BECAUSE I TRIED TO HELP. I OWE THEM NOTHING! AND YET... AND YET THEY'RE JUST MEN DOWN THERE, WAITING TO BE KILLED. MAYBE EVEN OUR OLD MATES...



DESPERATELY IN NEED OF HELP AND GUIDANCE, BLUEY TURNED TO LOFTY...

LOFTY! WE CAN'T LET OUR COBBERS BE KILLED AND DO NOTHING?

WE DON'T OWE THE ARMY A SINGLE THING, BLUEY! MAX IS RIGHT! LIE LOW AND GRAB THE GOLD WHEN THE SHOOTING'S ALL OVER!



WHILE BLUEY HESITATED, THE REST OF THE EX-PRISONERS CONCEALED THE TRACES OF GOLD. BUT FATE WAS CATCHING UP WITH THEM.



HURRY IT UP! WE WANT TO BE WELL CLEAR OF HERE BEFORE THE JAPS REACH THE RIDGE!

UNKNOWN TO MAX, AND THOSE ABOUT HIM, A DOZEN ENEMY RIFLES WERE AIMED AT THEIR BACKS, AND DEATH HOVERED CLOSE. BUT THE VILLAGERS SAW—AND REMEMBERED THE CRUELTY OF THOSE YELLOW-SKINNED MEN...



THAT NATIVE ARROW VOLLEY SAVED THE AUSTRALIANS — GAVE THEM TIME TO SNATCH UP GUNS — AND FIGHT BACK.



THE MEN OF FIVE PLATOON HESITATED. THEY HAD GROWN USED TO TAKING ORDERS FROM BIG MAX AND THE LURE OF GOLD WAS STILL STRONG WITHIN THEM. BUT BLUEY WATTS HAD MADE UP HIS MIND...



BLUEY GLARED FIERCLY AT LOFTY WHO GRINNED SHEEPISHLY...



THE TOUGH FIGHTING MEN OF FIVE PLATOON SUDDENLY REALISED WITH SHAME THAT THEY HAD BEEN FOLLOWING A COWARD. IT WAS THE FINAL SPUR.



CHECKED. THE JAPANESE PATROL GAVE WAY TO PANIC. FOR EVERY MAN THEY LOST TO A BULLET THEY LOST ANOTHER TO A SILENT, VENGEFUL ARROW. SIGHING OUT OF THE JUNGLE...



THAT TEMPESTUOUS ATTACK CARRIED THE AUSTRALIANS UP THE SLOPE. STUNNED, THE JAPANESE TURNED AND RAN AND EVEN THE WRATH OF THEIR COMMANDER COULD NOT STOP THE ROUT.



FIVE PLATOON LASHED THEM WITH ALL THE FIRE-POWER THEY COULD RAISE AND THE LANCE CORPORALS JOINED IN WITH VIGOUR. THEN BLUEY AND HIS SECTION ERUPTED ON THE JAP FLANK...



BATTLE-WISE, BLUEY HALTED HIS MEN ON THE CREST.



IN THAT SHORT BREATHING SPACE FIVE PLATOON SCOOPED SHALLOW FOXHOLES, SET UP THEIR CAPTURED MACHINE GUNS, DISTRIBUTED GRENADES. THEN THEY LIT A SIGNAL FIRE...



SEEING THAT BETRAYING COLUMN OF SMOKE, THE JAPANESE COLONEL LASHED HIS MEN INTO A SUICIDAL ASSAULT ON THE HILL.



BUT THOSE FEW DEFENDERS WERE FIGHTING MEN, AND THEY HELD ON TO THEIR CREST LINE WITH A STUBBORNNESS THAT MATCHED AND SURPASSED THE FANATICAL BRAVERY OF THE JAPANESE.



DEEP IN THE VALLEY, THE RISING PLUME OF SMOKE HAD CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE COLUMN OF AUSTRALIANS.



COLONEL DAVIS HAD LEARNED MUCH IN THE WEEKS SINCE THE ARREST OF SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS. HE KNEW NOW THAT JAPANESE WERE ALWAYS WHERE THEY WERE LEAST EXPECTED.

GET A MESSAGE OFF TO BRIGADE. TELL THEM WE BELIEVE WE MAY HAVE STRUCK JAP OPPOSITION. THE WHOLE BRIGADE WILL HAVE TO TAKE A DIFFERENT LINE...



THE BATTLE FOR THE CREST OF THE RIDGE HAD BEEN BITTER AND SAVAGE. BLUEY WATTS KNEW THAT THEY COULD NOT WITHSTAND SUCH ODDS FOR MUCH LONGER.

IF I'D GONE ALONG WITH MAX WE'D STILL HAVE A CHANCE OF LIFE. ALL I'VE DONE IS KILL MY OWN FRIENDS UP HERE!



BUT EVEN THOUGH DOUBTS HAMMERED ON BLUEY'S MIND, HE FOUGHT WITH COOL FEROCITY...



ONE MORE DETERMINED JAPANESE RUSH WOULD CRUSH THE AUSTRALIANS - BLUEY KNEW THAT BUT THEY WOULD DIE FIGHTING.



THEN THE SMASHING CONCUSSION OF BREN, LEE-ENFIELD AND MILLS 36 FROM DOWN SLOPE BROUGHT THE JAPANESE ATTACK TO AN ABRUPT HALT.



BATTLE WEARY BUT DEFIANT, THE DEFENDERS OF THE CREST WAITED FOR THE NEW ARRIVALS.

YOU SAVED US ALL. WHAT
A FIGHT YOU'VE PUT UP!
I'LL SEE YOU RECEIVE
PROPER RECOGNITION
OF YOUR GALLANTRY!

GOOD GRIEF!
THAT'S SERGEANT
BLUEY WATTS!



AS THEY MOVED DOWN TO THE NATIVE VILLAGE, ONE OF THE MILITARY POLICEMEN TOLD THE WHOLE STORY OF THEIR CRASH LANDING. COLONEL DAVIS STARED THOUGHTFULLY AT BLUEY AND THE SCARECROWS OF FIVE PLATOON...

CHARGES WERE PREFERRED, SERGEANT, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO FACE THEM. BUT AFTER THIS, I'M GOING TO MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH TO GET YOU OFF THE HOOK AND BACK IN MY BATTALION AGAIN!

I'M SORRY I WALLOPED YOU, SIR, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO

WE HIT THE JAP FOR SIX IN THE LAGHI VALLEY. BLUEY, THEY WERE THERE, ALL RIGHT!



THEN WHINING VOICES AND CURSES BROUGHT ALL HEADS ROUND...

FOUND THESE SKULKERS UNDER A HUT, SIR, I THINK THE PROVOSTS KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM!

TAKE 'EM AWAY. THEY'RE NOT FIT COMPANY FOR THE MEN OF MY FIVE PLATOON!



AND SO SERGEANT BLUEY WATTS AND HIS COMRADES OF FIVE PLATOON REJOINED THEIR BATTALION. HE DID NOT FEEL LIKE A HERO - JUST A SOLDIER WHO HAD STEPPED OUT OF LINE, AND WAS HAPPY TO BE BACK.

THIS JUNGLE WAR BRINGS OUT THE BEST AND THE WORST IN MEN, MAJOR. THERE'S NOT MUCH WRONG WITH FIVE PLATOON - I KNOW THAT NOW!

THE WAR MOVED AWAY FROM THAT JUNGLE PARADISE. BUT THE MEN OF FIVE PLATOON REMEMBERED. BLUEY WATTS, FOR ONE, WOULD RETURN... AND NOT FOR THE GOLD ALONE!

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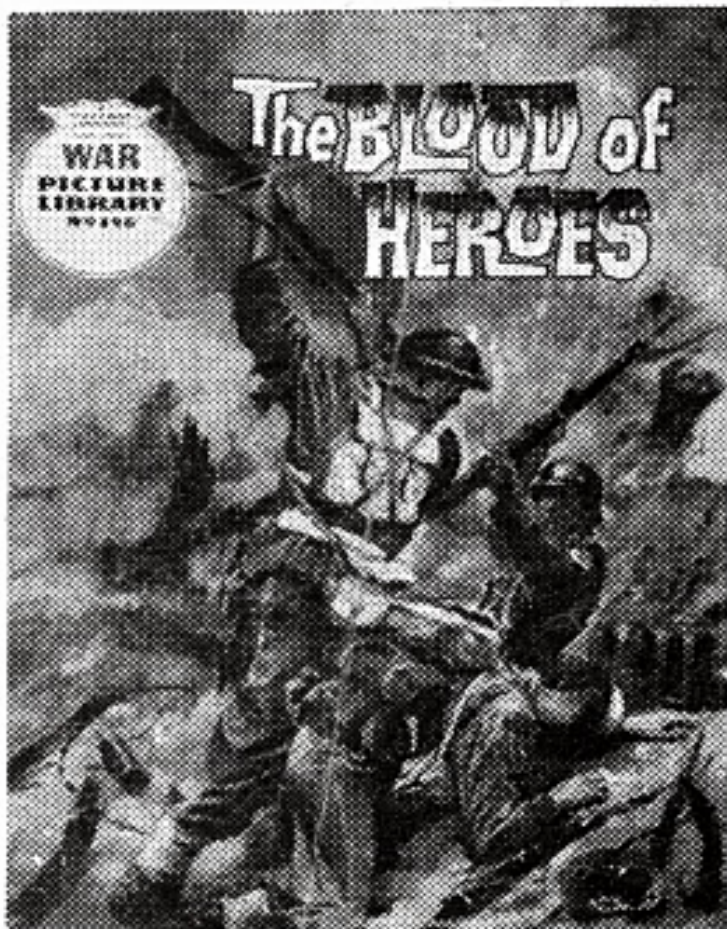
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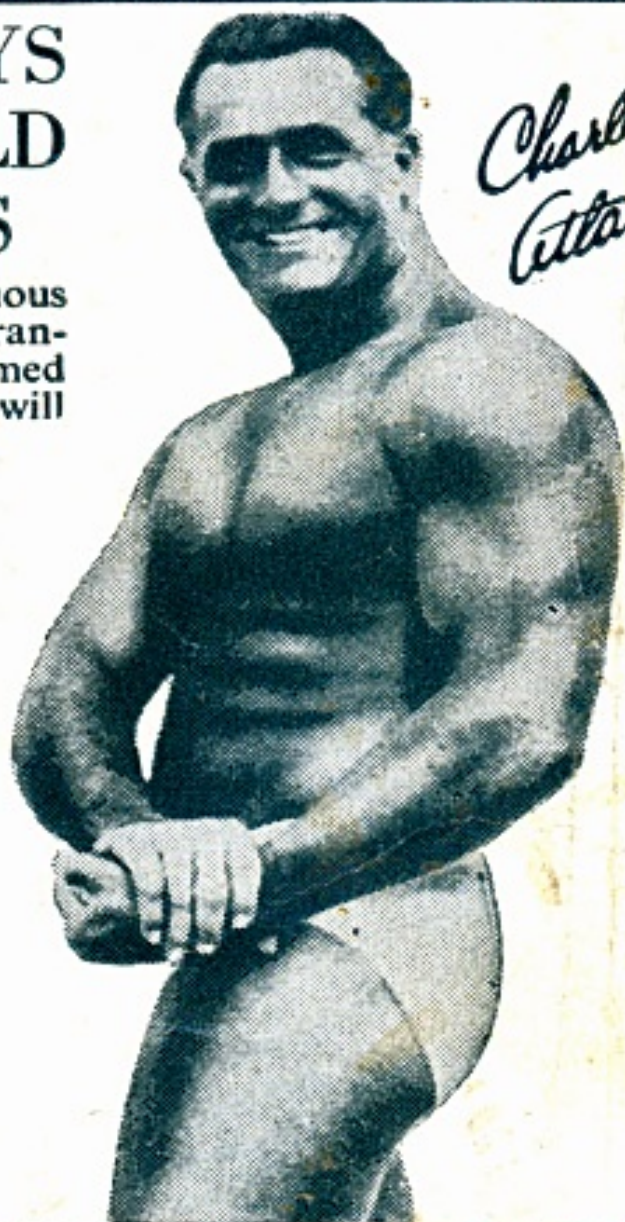
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